

## Agencies team up to help parolees stay out of prison



*State Rep. Rita Mayfield sponsored Lake County's first Hope Summit at the Greenbelt Forest Preserve. / Frank Abderholden/Sun-Times Media*

August 6, 2014 By Frank Abderholden.

The Illinois Department of Corrections held its first Hope Summit in Lake County on Tuesday to help parolees and probationers get their lives back on track and stay out of the criminal justice system.

"The reason for this is to promote the fight against recidivism," said Marcus King, senior community outreach coordinator for the IDOC.

(Story continued next page)



*Tatina Alonso, 23, of Highland Park, talks with Anthony McIntyre, 42, of Lake Villa, about the services available at the Hope Summit. One of the services provided by the Waukegan Public Library was voter registration. | Frank Abderholden/Sun-Times Media*

After initially having a hard time finding a place to hold the community expo, King said state Rep. Rita Mayfield, D-Waukegan, stepped in and secured the Greenbelt Forest Preserve as a venue.

“I wanted it to be someplace nice where they would feel comfortable and promote the positive feeling of what’s going on here,” she said.

Contributing state organizations included the Illinois Secretary of State’s office and the departments of Health and Human Services (DCFS), Health Care and Family Services (HFS), Public Health (IDPH), Employment Services (IDES) and the Housing Development Authority (IHDA). Other vendors included the Illinois Department of Veteran’s Affairs, Waukegan Public Library, Nicassa, Citizen Utility Board, Woodforest Bank, Department of Women’s Health and the Illinois Student’s Assistance Commission.

**(Story continued next page)**

All were on hand to help open bank accounts, deal with past child support payments, sign up for health care, reduce utility bills, get a driver's license or state identification, register to vote and tap into social services that offer anger management classes or substance abuse programs.

King said the rate of recidivism in Illinois is down 8 percent over the past two years.

"As of today there are 49,050 inmates in the IDOC custody. There are just over 27,000 parolees statewide," said King, adding that in Lake County there are 1,062.

"We only invited 741 because we had to filter out sex offenders and such."



*The Summit of Hope, run in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Corrections, was held at the Greenbelt Forest Preserve on Tuesday, Aug. 5. By noon, over 300 parolees and probationers had gone through the community expo where local and state service providers create a "one-stop" environment for those in need of assistance. | Frank Abderholden/Sun-Times Media*

The summits started four years ago under a different name, and it's only been the last two years that the program has been expanded to include over 200 events. At noon Tuesday, organizers had 300 parolees and probationers go through the process, making it one of the top five best attended events in the summit's history.

"We can talk to them about what they need to do to get their license back or get a state ID," said Ellen White, deputy director of intergovernmental affairs in the Illinois Secretary of State's office. "A valid state ID is one of the building blocks to re-entry into society. You need that for housing, health care, job training. We are a key building block."

**(Story continued next page)**



For the parolees and probationers, the event counts as an official visit and includes the drug testing.

Roley Johnson, 28, of North Chicago, didn't want to discuss what got him to this point other than to say "wrong choices." He already had his driver's license and was looking at getting a free cell phone from Life Wireless, which provides low-income families and individuals with phone service through the federal Lifeline program.



*Ann Budin, 59, of Arlington Heights, has volunteered for all the Summit of Hope expos this year. At the Lake County expo on Tuesday, Aug. 5, she chats with Roley Johnson, 28, of North Chicago, a parolee who found the expo helpful. | Frank Abderholden/Sun-Times Media*

"This is a nice place," he said of the venue and services. "They have a lot of resources, but I don't need a lot of them."

Johnson has a construction job now, and does carpentry and plumbing work, but he also checked out the temporary jobs.

"This shows you that there are people out there who will help a person do better in life," he said.

**(Story continued next page)**

Lake Villa resident Anthony McIntyre, formerly of North Chicago, left a gang lifestyle and has become involved in community organizing and politics. He said he tries telling gang members to give up the criminal game, but the message is not always well received.

McIntyre's life changed when three men came to rob his apartment. One was killed and one of the three fingered him as the shooter.

"I was charged with first degree murder. It was a retaliation thing. The guy who said he saw me had drug charges dropped once he testified against me," McIntyre said. "As far police and prosecutors were concerned, I was a gang member and needed to be off the streets."

He got out last year after serving 19 years in prison. He said the best thing to do is stay busy.



*Anthony McIntyre, 42, of Lake Villa, talks with Staffing Network's Adriana Lay, 40, of Wildwood, about possible jobs. He was released from prison last year after serving 19 years for first-degree murder. The volunteer that is escorting him is Jean Manzi of Waukegan. / Frank Abderholden/Sun-Times Media*

**(Story continued next page)**

McIntyre has an entertainment consulting business that is not doing well, he said, so he also works in construction.

“Four times I was hired and fired on the same day once they found out what I was in for,” said McIntyre, who also speaks at recidivism conferences. “Staying busy is a good thing. I’m a new person now compared to what I was before.”

Lake County State’s Attorney Michael Nerheim said the county has a high parolee rate, one of the highest in the state.

“These people all paid their debt to society and now we want them to become productive citizens again,” Nerheim said. “They need to know we want them to be successful. These services we are providing is to make sure they stay on the right track.